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ABSTRACT

Sociological literature on careers reveals that there are four major approaches framing career study, i.e., developmental, objective-empirical, normative, and interactive perspectives. Analysis of these approaches points to an orienting conceptualization of career based on the core characteristics of centrality, duration, and public conspicuousness. Centrality refers to dominant intention or engagement which involves identity and the self. Duration implies persistence over time and includes the structural attributes of career, contingencies, timing, pattern, and sequence. Public conspicuousness indicates that the centrality and duration of an individual's career are recognized as part of the institutional arrangements of society. Thus conceived, the concept directs investigators to look for markers or signposts at both the subjective and objective levels and the interplay between the two within and across multiple domains. Life transitions may serve as career markers because they involve changes in customary behavior patterns and in self-concept. (Author)

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Career as a Developmental Concept*

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Abstract

Sociologists in human development have noted the importance of the interaction of various life domains across the life course. The career concept has been proposed for research addressing the timing, pattern and sequence of events but the term has been used inconsistently in empirical investigation of the aging process. A review of sociological literature on careers is presented to show the four major theoretical approaches framing career study: the developmental, the objective-empirical, the normative, and the interactive perspectives. Analysis of these approaches points to an orienting conceptualization of career which is based on the core characteristics centrality, duration, and public conspicuousness. Centrality refers to dominant intention or engagement which involves identity and the self. Duration implies persistence over time and includes the structural attributes of career, contingencies, timing, pattern and sequence. Public conspicuousness indicates that the centrality and duration of an individual's career are recognized as part of the institutional arrangements of society. Thus conceived, the concept directs investigators to look for markers or signposts at both the subjective and objective levels and the interplay between the two within and across multiple domains. Thus for example, it is expected that life transitions will serve as career markers since they involve changes in customary behavior patterns and in self-conception as well.

Overview

In sociology, the concept career crosscuts such diverse areas as occupations, social gerontology, social stratification, deviance, and human development. The term appears repeatedly in articles addressing morale, life satisfaction, mobility, retirement, creativity, lifestyle, and social integration. Yet its meaning and application are uneven; uses range from career as the story of adult life (Chown 1977) to career as an individual's job history (Spilerman 1977 after Slocum 1966). Check forgers have careers (Lemert 1967), as do narcotics addicts (Lindesmith and Strauss 1968) and janitors (Gold 1964). According to some definitions most women and the lower classes do not (e.g. Wilensky 1961). Types, stages and functions of careers have been specified (Hall 1968, 1969; Form and Miller 1949; Wilensky 1961; Stebbins 1970; Thompson et.al. 1968) and their relationship to leisure, lifestyle, and social integration emphasized (Wilensky 1960; Zablocki and Kanter 1976). The consensus: whatever its meaning, "career" is one of the central concerns of adulthood-- a concern that embraces both subjective, social psychological components (identity, self concept) and elements of social structure (institutional networks, labor market, reference groups, role relationships, formal organizations).

A review of the literature on careers in sociology reveals

that above and beyond the disagreements about what careers are and who has them four major theoretical approaches frame career study: the developmental, the objective-empirical, the normative, and the interactive perspectives. It is cautioned that these are not presented as mutually exclusive categories, but that they represent four different, important ways of framing career investigation. Traditionally, career has been used primarily within the study of occupations, but the usefulness of the concept for other spheres or life domains has been convincingly proposed, especially among those in the interactive approach. The intersection and mutual influence of life domains is a research frontier for which the concept career is particularly well-suited.

The major portion of this paper reviews the four theoretical approaches to career study. In the first section, career development is presented as the study of occupational careers within the context of a general life-span theory of psycho-social development which emphasizes stage and vocational maturity. Investigation of occupational career and career lines as job history or occupational mobility in the context of socioeconomic achievement, mobility, and stratification characterizes the objective-empirical approach, which is reviewed in the second section. The third and fourth sections suggest that the normative and interactive frameworks are contrasted by their emphases on career-taking and career-making. The normative approach proposes career models and outlines the career characteristics of structured upward mobility, stages and types of careers, the career-person and the career-society "fit"; interactionists explore and expose the ways people esta-

blish careers through social interaction, changes in the self and identity, and career contingencies. These four approaches are compared and contrasted in the fifth section, where it is argued that a distinctively sociological approach to career is called for given the desirability of exploring the mutual influence of life domains.

The intersection and mutual influences of work and family have been neglected in the social sciences but the question of the relationship between forms of work and family life is now a research frontier. The sixth section reviews career studies in this area that, not surprisingly, crosscut traditional theoretical boundaries.

The conceptualization of career appears to be a particularly good example of noncumulative science. The question of whether or not the term should be retained and under what circumstances has been answered through preferential use, rather than upon theoretical grounds. In the final section an orienting conceptualization of career is suggested which is based on the core career characteristics centrality, duration, and public conspicuousness. Recommendations are made regarding the appropriate use of the term. An example illustrates the complementarity of the various sociological approaches and the desirability of triangulation of research methods for future career investigation.

The Developmental Approach

The developmental perspective is characterized by an emphasis on expansion, realization of potential through gradual progress from simple to a more complex, fuller, greater, or better state. Those persons identified with the developmental perspective use terms such as stage or phase, maturity, interest, ability, and personality.

Three different lines of investigation can be discerned in this approach, general theories of human development, research on lifestyle and adaptation, and career development theory. Only the last--career development theory-- uses the term career.

General theories of human psychosocial development (e.g., Erikson 1959; Levinson 1978) treat life as a whole, encompassing social, psychological, biological and cultural dimensions and crosscutting institutional domains. Research addressing lifestyle and adaptation has resulted in creation of typologies of lifestyle patterns which globally describe and categorize people on the basis of role involvement, life satisfaction, and attitudes toward aging (Neugarten et. al 1964; Williams and Wirths 1965; Lowenthal 1975). Such styles have to do with relatively persistent forms of coping or adjustment to life. Neither of these two lines of study explicitly addresses career, although they illustrate the context in which career development theory is embedded.

Career development refers to a process of occupational choice, commitment, and establishment that is a part of general life span psychosocial development. The theory was a response to the needs

of vocational guidance counselors seeking to facilitate ... ional choice. Attention focused on delineating a sequence of developmental stages with a special focus on the occupational domain. Thus Ginzberg et. al. (1951) proposed a three-stage process with substages entailing increased awareness of reality conditions or fit between the individual's goals and opportunities. These are:

1. the fantasy stage wherein children up to age 11 have no awareness of barriers standing in their way;
2. the tentative stage, in junior high and high school when occupational choices are based almost exclusively on subjective factors; and
3. the final stage spanning the college years and based on an emphasis on reality conditions.

Super (1953, 1957, 1963) expanded Ginzberg's theory* by adding the ingredients of compromise as a result of psychosocial forces impinging upon the individual and of the development of a stable self-concept through maturation of abilities and reality testing. Following Buehler (1933) Super proposed five life stages and outlined their substages:

1. the growth stage, extending from birth to age 14 and consisting of substages
   fantasy (ages 4-10),
   interest (ages 11-12), and
   capacity (ages 13-14);
2. the exploratory stage, subdivided into
   tentative (ages 15-17),
   transition (ages 18-21), and
   trial (ages 22-24);
3. the establishment stage, consisting of
   trial (ages 25-30), and
   stabilization (ages 31-44);

*An interesting characteristic of developmental theories is the reflection of cultural values and scientific trends in their development. Ginzberg et. al. propose no stages for adulthood. While Super expands the theory to include post-retirement, a look at his substages reveals the relative paucity of information and concern about the middle years.

4. the maintenance stage spanning the years from 45-60; and
5. the decline stage, subdivided into
   deceleration (ages 65-70), and
   stabilization (ages 71+).

Movement through these stages involves all aspects of life and living, not just the vocational. Thus the exploration stage includes development of self-concept via role modeling and role playing at home and formal exploration in both school curriculum and part-time work outside the home. Degree of development is referred to and measured as maturity; vocational maturity then is relative location on the continuum of career development from growth to decline.

Longitudinal study has supported the validity of Super's substages in the exploratory period and resulted in construction of a typology of differential career processes, namely, constant maturity or the consistent, persistent, realistic pursuit of first occupational goal, emerging maturity or passage through the stages and tasks of Super's model, degeneration, involving the progressive deterioration of aspirations and achievement which results in frustration and loss of status, and constant immaturity or the persistent fixation on fantastic, unrealistic goals with no achievement advance (Gribbons and Lohnes 1968).

This brief review serves to demonstrate the defining qualities of the developmental approach to the study of careers. Career development theory applies to everyone, encompasses the entire life span, and sees occupational career as part of a process of increasing psychosocial maturity. The role of external influence such as the school and the labor market, is recognized, but is not incorporated as a component of the theory itself.

The Objective-Empirical Approach

Reliance upon observation, experimentation or practical experience rather than theory is the hallmark of the objective-empirical perspective. Researchers in this tradition most often investigate occupational career and career lines in the context provided by the socioeconomic achievement, mobility and stratification literatures. Analysis of job sequences is the focus.

Recent empirical investigation of career lines has developed in three stages, beginning with the socioeconomic achievement literature which measured the impact of factors prior to labor force entry (father's education and occupation, intelligence) upon occupational standing at first, and often second, job (Blau and Duncan 1967; Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan 1972; Kerckhoff 1974). Although these studies do not span the entire career (long-term job histories), the assumption was that this early experience largely determined subsequent career achievement. Interest has since turned to consideration of patterns of movement between jobs. Careers are conceived as a mobility process or succession of job shifts.* This work (e.g. Sørensen 1975) is based on analysis of a pair of jobs, rather than complete job histories. Sørensen's career model sees the career process as mobility. The outcome of job shifts is the solution to a difference equation where the gain is a function of a person's level of resources and the prestige and income of the job left. When individual resources are held constant, the equation is interpreted as indicating the degree to which the occupational structure allows for opportunities for gains in achievement, prestige, and income.

*An early example of job-shift analysis is in Palmer (1954) who outlined types of shifts as employer only, employer and industry, employer, occupation and industry, and other, for 5000 males and a small sample of females in 1940-1949. She found that type of shift varied by occupational status and age.

The most comprehensive proposal for objectively representing career lines or trajectories for long term work histories is in Spilerman (1977).* Arguing that the traditional conceptualization of careers in occupational sociology is an idealized description of work experience, he advocates the view of career lines as "empirical regularities in the labor market, to be determined through the examination of data" (1977: 555). The key datum in such an analysis is the individual's career, i.e., the individual's work history. The construction of career trajectories involves establishment of a port of entry or a "job held by a significant proportion of persons without prior employment in another position in the trajectory" (1977: 560), and delineation of branches or lines of shifts after entrance. The result is diagrammatically represented as a career tree consisting of a number of mobility paths across time. Earnings, status, or satisfaction trajectories can be similarly plotted for various career lines, which can then be classified by types or sorts of trajectories in the labor market or used to estimate an individual's job history from her first job code. All of these tasks of course require large samples; accordingly Spilerman discusses in some detail strategies for using survey data in constructing career trajectories. The awareness of problems in matching research problem

*Other research displays long-term work histories (Form and Miller 1949; Wilensky 1961) but more appropriately belongs in the normative theoretical framework.

to data set (in this case, retrospective life histories or synthetic cohort analysis of census data) is coupled with an understanding of the "place" of objective career line analysis in the study of careers. Thus conceived, career lines constitute the "bare facts" to be explained and elaborated by investigation of organizational settings and quality of work experience across the life span.

The objective-empirical study of careers is confined to one domain, that of work. This is not surprising given the groundwork that has been laid for understanding the structure of work experience within occupational sociology, the historical association of career with work, and the existence of extensive data sets on employment history. Objective-empirical studies utilize highly sophisticated, powerful analytic techniques, are highly reliable, and externally valid since data from large samples can be collected and analyzed efficiently. Subjective meaning is ignored, however, and theoretical considerations are minimal. Thus this approach is best conceived as a method[5] which is most fruitfully employed in conjunction with theoretical insights such as those provided by the normative and interactive approaches.

[5]This is also the position taken by Coser in his controversial presidential address to the American Sociological Association in 1975.

The Normative Approach

Career-taking vs. career-making

Before reviewing the literature on careers in this section it is necessary to spell out some key points of divergence between the normative and the interactive approaches. Investigation in the normative perspective is tremendously diverse, addressing a multitude of career issues and employing widely disparate definitions of career. What these studies share, however, is an emphasis on consistency in the characteristics of careers, career strategies, and career-person "fit". The usage is implicitly or explicitly prescriptive, that is, patterned sequences exist outside the individuals experiencing them. This becomes clearer in contrast to the interactive framework, where predetermination is minimized and elements of the self and identity are worked out in different situation-specific ways. Thus the two views of career are akin to Turner's (1962) distinction between role-taking and role-making. As Turner explains:

> Roles "exist" in varying degrees of concreteness and consistency, while the individual confidently frames his (sic) behavior as if they had unequivocal existence and clarity. The result is that in attempting from time to time to make aspects of the roles explicit he is creating and modifying roles as well as merely bringing them to light, the process is not only role-taking but <u>role-making</u> (1962: 216).

Following Turner, then, career-taking involves the person in a sequence of distinct and identifiable relationships to work, family, or community participation across time and corresponds to the treatment of careers in the normative framework. Career-making entails the creation and modification of the self; researchers in the interactive approach are less concerned with establishing career models than in observing the basic tendency for actors to behave as if

there were careers, and even to create them.

The normative approach entails identification and investigation of a standard, model, or pattern regarded as typical for a specific group. In the sociology of occupations the normative approach has consisted of ethnographies of specific occupations (Walker and Guest 1952; Janowitz 1960; Smigel 1964), the construction of typologies cross-cutting specific occupations and describing different work experiences (Caplow 1954; Slocum 1966; Ritzer 1972), and consideration of mobility patterns and job histories over time (Miller and Form 1949; Wilensky 1961)-- undertakings that have become thought of as career analysis. In the study of careers, as well as in other areas of normative sociology, researchers couch their accounts in terms of role, status, structure, consensus, stage, and type. Attention is turned to defining career, promoting career models, tracing mobility for various occupations and social groups, relating types of careers to other variables such as social integration, exploring typical organization-person relationships, and describing the social structure of occupations.

Definitions of work careers can be divided into two major categories: those that apply to everyone in the labor force, and those that apply to only a restricted portion of the labor force. Thus career can be viewed as "any unfolding sequence of jobs" (Thompson et. al. 1968:7), a definition frequently implicitly employed in the occupational sociology literature. The more restricted view requires that careers consist of more or less ordered sequences of functionally related jobs arranged in a hierarchy of prestige (Wilensky 1961),

involve progressively more responsible roles within an organization from entry into first position, through retirement (Slocum 1966), or apply to any work that is meaningful (as implied in O'Toole 1974). Careers entail commitment (Fine 1970) and even "calling", so that the term may rightfully apply only to the professions (Greenwood 1962). These definitions are parts of general career models that vary in detail and sophistication.

Career models and career characteristics

Structured upward mobility Careers take place in work organizations or social systems with networks of relationships, formal positions, and occupational roles, as well as characteristic organizational and occupational cultures (Wilensky 1961; Slocum 1966).

> An occupational career may be defined ... as an orderly sequence of development extending over a period of years and involving progressively more responsible roles within an occupation. With reference to occupational careers in work organizations, the theoretical model involves entry into a position that requires the performance of occupational duties at the lowest rung of the occupational ladder. This is followed by a sequence of promotions into higher-level positions within an organization, leading eventually to the pinnacle and finally to retirement (Slocum 1966: 5).

There are a number of criticisms of this model. The structural view of careers as interorganizational upward mobility in this context fails to include aspects of ability, skill, or personal resources. Moreover, informal factors-- precluded by the model-- have been shown to be related in important ways to promotion and career achievement (Dalton 1951; Riemer 1977). In addition, "situs", or horizontal dimension has been shown to be fruitful in conceptualizing occupations (Hatt 1950), as have horizontal mobility (Becker 1952), and self-perceptions of progress. Incumbents of positions in organizations

vary in how they orient themselves regarding mobility; older managers and those entering at lower levels in organizational structures tend to use career origin as a reference point while their counterparts look to high level positions for their mobility orientations (Tausky and Dubin 1965).

Consideration of the match between attributes of the person and work via career takes the form of concern with competence, aspirations, perceived structures of opportunities, and predilection for working with data, people, or things. The following models assume the matching to be relatively unproblematic, although the models of course do not apply in every case.

Motivation Career anchors are personal motivational-attitudinal-value syndromes established early in experience, that mediate between person and work by determining what people want out of their careers, i.e., the source of their motivation (Schein 1975). Examples are managerial competence, security, creativity, and autonomy-independence, which ideally are matched to occupational roles and are implicated in career success. Additional considerations are the degree of career motivation, the degree to which one's occupation is a source of satisfaction, and the priority assigned career relative to other pursuits-- career saliency (Nasih 1967; Gowdy et.al. 1975). These factors lead to expectations about a number of work-related experiences, from career decision to adjustment to retirement.

Skills Fine (1970) advocates a model of careers and career growth wherein types of skills, worker qualifications, and job requirements interact to produce typical career paths. Conceptualizing worker

qualifications and job requirements in terms of how workers function in relation to data, people, and things, subdivided by the degree of complexity of work as high, medium, low, and basic, leads to a matrix displaying paths of upward mobility. Specific paths can move up, down, or across, however, to form paths of specialization, generalization, and enrichment. Under the reasoning that certain skills accompany certain job requirements and that skills may become modified with age, the model points to possibilities not only for workers just embarking on careers, but also indicates appropriate new careers for older workers. In criticism of Fine's model, like those in the normative approach who see mobility, personal adjustment, or motivation as key issues affecting careers, the model assumes all things equal-- organizational and labor market factors are minimally important.

The structure of occupations A more sophisticated model is presented by Thompson et. al. (1968) who combine a social structural analysis of occupations with social psychological attributes of career incumbents to delineate patterns of orderly careers-- those involving a sequence of jobs within a single occupation-- and patterns of disrupted careers-- those involving a switch of occupations. Briefly, individual characteristics are seen as bases of careers: these are competence, aspiration, and perceived structure of opportunity. These characteristics, along with life cycle stage, figure in one's career strategy. A number of accounts of occupational organizations point to four types of strategies: heuristic-- an orientation toward advancement, which leads to switching across either organization or

occupation; occupational-- movement across organization only in order to remain in the same occupation; organizational-- movement across occupation to remain within the same organization; and stability-- the notion of another job is irrelevant. The social structure of occupations consists of early and late ceiling progressions (e.g., staff nursing vs. academic professorship), and collegially-defined vs. enterprise-defined occupational roles (e.g., professional vs. clerical). The model allows for determination of appropriate sequences of strategies for orderly careers in the various types of occupations. For example, the career prototype for collegially-defined, late-ceiling occupations such as the professions calls for an occupational strategy, followed by a strategy of stability. Disrupted careers, which at first appear uninterpretable, can be better understood by utilizing this model. For example, life cycle factors may impede mobility, a requirement of collegially-defined occupations. An individual in such a predicament may be compelled to switch to an enterprise-defined occupation-- a highly stressful experience especially if her personal investment has been substantial.

Careers and society Careers are implicated in the maintenance of social order (Wilensky 1961) and are integral to the quality of life (O'Toole 1974). When defined as vertical mobility among white-collar workers, career serves as a force pulling workers upward by holding out the promise of continuous rewards. "Orderly" careers in this sense function to motivate successful role performance, giving continuity to experience among the most able in the population (Wilensky 1961). The promise of upward mobility in this model is the dynamic

joining person to career and career to society via its function for social integration. A display of job histories of male middle mass workers has shown that no more than 30 percent have job histories that fit this model of orderly career (Wilensky 1961).

The second career The prescriptive quality of the above models can be criticized through a look at a more and more commonly recognized phenomenon, the second career. The second career has been defined as a shift in occupation and entry into a new career sequence (Haug and Sussman 1970; Kay 1974). Labelled "disruptive", "disorderly", or referred to as a mismatch of person to job in models restricted to career-taking, the second career is nevertheless an increasingly common occurrence especially at middle age (Slotkin 1954; MacMichael 1974; Brim and Abeles 1975).

Career as meaningful work Careers in the general sense as meaningful work requiring mutual commitment and personal investment between employer and employee is related to overall work satisfaction (Strauss 1974), educational attainment (MacMichael 1974), family stability (Furstenberg 1974; Rainwater 1974), productivity and self esteem (Walton 1974). These authors point out that indeed this career model of "meaningful work" is not applicable to many American workers but the source of the failure lies not in the individual's career line or the structure of opportunity, but rather in the organization of the workplace and in overall economic policies-- i.e., in organizational policy, and institutions. Advocates propose collective effort for change, or collective career-making through reorganization of the workplace and realignment of priorities in policy formulation.

The defining qualities of the normative approach to careers are these: the presentation of models to describe the person's relationship to her work -- a procedure which comes out of an orientation that stresses career-taking over career-making, and confinement of study almost exclusively to the work domain and therefore to adulthood and, practically speaking, to men only. The occupational structure including career lines exist outside the individual as that to which she aspires and adjusts. There is little agreement or continuity regarding definitions of career or formulation of career models themselves.

The Interactive Approach

The interactive approach consists of the study of how people establish careers through everyday social interaction, how they decide relevant timing, pattern, and sequence of progression in their relationships to work organizations, in total institutions, and in establishing deviant identities.[8] Interactionists speak of subjective careers and accordingly employ ethnomethodological procedures to investigate the working out of identity and the presentation and modification of the self -- in short, career-making.

The notion of career as encompassing subjective experience was put forward by Hughes (1937) and has been reiterated by interactionists ever since (e.g. Goffman 1961; Stebbins 1970a, 1970b). The subjective career is

> ...the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him. This perspective is not absolutely fixed either as to points of view, direction, or destination (Hughes 1937:63).

Career, then, is two-sided,

> ...one side... linked to internal matters held dearly and closely, such as image of self and felt-identity; the other side concerns official position, jural relations, and style of life, and is part of a publically accessible institutional complex (Goffman 1961:127).

From this view the study of careers is the study of lives touching the social order in various spheres, and interpreting the meaning

[8] The appropriateness of the term career for framing investigation in deviance has been highly debated. Lemert (1967) sees the delineation of fixed stages as incompatible with an interactionist approach and points out that the notion of recruitment, a hallmark of occupational career study, is virtually meaningless in deviance. Stebbins (1970b) sees the career concept as the impetus behind the important approach termed labelling theory, for it has allowed for understanding of a crucial contingency: stigmatization by the community.

of contingencies as they present themselves and have been presented and experienced in the past.

Contingencies are turning points in the form of unexpected or unanticipated events, possibilities, which heighten the individual's awareness of her identity as it relates to a particular domain. Specific contingencies are more or less typical or common depending upon how, when, and to whom they happen, and the extent to which they have consensually-established stages. Experiencing contingencies affects one's future direction; contingencies are fateful to identity.

Contingencies take many forms. In the dance musician's career, usually soon after marriage family and work roles prove conflicting; resolution of the role conflict is fateful for the duration and direction of the career (Becker 1953). For the janitor, knowing the right people at the right time is a contingency determining how ritzy a building he can land. Saving enough capital, for the janitor, is a major goal, for he is always looking ahead to retirement (Gold 1964). Being scheduled for surgery, as a TB patient in long term treatment, is a turning point indicating how much longer the patient can expect to remain hospitalized (Roth 1963). Awareness of signs from hospital staff and family regarding her health status constitutes critical juncture for the terminally ill patient in her hospital career (Glaser and Strauss 1971). Mental patients, Goffman observes "distinctively suffer not from mental illness, but from contingencies"(1961:135). Major turning points for criminal offenders are first contact with agents of social control, and being labelled deviant by the community (Stebbins 1970b). The awareness of advancing age, of course, is a contingency in the hockey player's career (Faulkner 1974).

Inherently indeterminable, yet determinate for careers, contingencies not only affect future behavior, they also influence the conception of self. The individual adjusts her identity to remain consistent with past conceptions and experiences and to imagine the self in the future. As Stebbins (1970b) reports, the deviant identity develops when the difficulty of establishing the self in non-deviant roles becomes apparent late in the career. Similarly, commitment to occupational identities has been shown to be contingent upon the development of problem interest, pride in new skills, investment, internalization of motives, the acquisition of professional ideology, and sponsorship in professional graduate training (Becker and Carper 1956). In the mental patient's career, level of ward assignment significantly affects self conception as movement up and down in the ward system entails fluctuating exposure to privilege and status, yet also means a change in the calculus of risk to self-esteem by way of changing potential for degrading interaction with staff (Goffman 1961).

Careers in work organizations, institutions, and deviance vary in the extent to which they have consensually-established stages. The interactionists have been engaged in uncovering such stages in areas where career patterns have not been clearly apparent. Accordingly, interactionists frequently use exploratory methods so as to ascertain the actor's own view of her past, present, and future, and the relationship between self and social structure.

Toward a Sociological Approach to Career

The defining qualities of the major theoretical approaches framing career study having been outlined, a brief review comparing and contrasting them is in order. Figure 1. summarizes some key characteristics of each approach.

The deficiencies of the developmental framework are highlighted by taking a curious sociological attitude towards it. Career development, as part of larger theories of psycho-social development, focuses on inherent, universal behaviors underlying human nature. Career markers are the completion of universal tasks which indicate maturity at appropriate ages. The approach suffers from middle-class bias, and is so general in its application that it precludes consideration of individual differences and subjective experience. Differences by social characteristics such as sex, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, and situational influences upon behavior, are ignored. These are factors which the normative and interactive approaches stress, and that are integral to the sociological enterprise. An emphasis upon the psychological, coupled with relative neglect of the social, then, is a major drawback of the developmental approach. Thus, for example, in analyzing career choice, developmental theory can lead to the imputation of personal failure or "immaturity" when actually the structure of opportunity in the form of labor market conditions constitutes a major contingency affecting the enactment of one's choice.

The objective-empirical approach is, in and of itself,

Figure 1. Some key characteristics of the four theoretical approaches framing career study in sociology

Characteristic	Theoretical approach			
	Developmental	Objective-Empirical	Normative	Interactive
Subjective experience	no	no	no	yes
Domain-specific focus	no (work career embedded in general theory)	yes (work only)	yes (work only, other domains provide context)	no (various domains, considered individually or as contingencies)
Universal application	yes	no	no	yes
Individual variations	no	yes	yes	yes
Career markers	task completion at appropriate ages	objective job changes	job changes and individual adjustment to resulting role shifts	identity responses to life events and contingencies
Focus of investigation	inherent, universal, broadly applicable behaviors underlying human nature	structural regularities in society (e.g. labor market)	significance of structural regularities for individuals	how structural regularities are created by individuals
Comments	non-sociological broader context of psycho-social development	method for identifying publically conspicuous career lines	career-making analysis of duration	career-making analysis of centrality

relatively atheoretical and therefore lacking in social meaning and internal validity. Researchers in the empirical perspective employ a conceptualization of career as job history, which is a relatively easily measured objective fact. The subjective side of career is unanalyzed. As a method, this approach is highly reliable and externally valid when proper sampling techniques are used. Thus it is useful in conjunction with other methods, and in areas where previous study has established internal validity of the items analyzed. For example, as Stebbins (1971b) optimistically argues, objective career lines could conceivably be delineated even for deviant careers when and if typical career markers, timing, and patterned sequences have been identified.

In career analysis the objective-empirical approach results in the delineation of structural regularities in the form of career lines or careers aggregated by important social characteristics of individuals such as occupation, age, or socioeconomic status. The emphasis is on predictive, rather than explanatory power; there remain questions such as: what is the meaning of the experience of mobility? what are the personal consequences of having a career outside a common trajectory? what are the normative qualities of a given career line? what is the relationship of career-making to the twists and turns of an established career line?

The normative career, as a standard or model, exists outside empirical regularities or the individual person yet frames investigation of the extent to which the requirements of the model are met in the social world. Despite the disagreement among researchers

about what a career is and how it should relate to other phenomena in this approach, the formal definitions put forward all presuppose some degree of consensus as to the meaning of career and related concepts and does not make the observer's and actor's indicators for recognizing such meaning an integral part of the investigation. This theoretical framework, however, distinctively addresses the social in its emphasis on variation by social characteristics of actors and on the relationship between culture and person. This is the perspective of conventional sociology; investigation of career-taking in this approach is complemented by both the objective-empirical method and by the interactive framework and its study of career-making.

As stated earlier, the interactive approach sees the very establishment of careers as problematic, as involving the self and identity in social interaction within a social structure. Career is two-sided, including both subjective and objective experience. A person may have many careers in a lifetime, although sociological study in this framework tends to focus upon one career at a time, seeing other domains as career contingencies. Interactionists tend to study areas that are unexplored or inaccessible, uncovering existing patterns. Thus this view reminds conventional sociologists of the taken-for-granted in highly developed areas such as occupational sociology, and can point out the comparative utility of established models for uncharted or less accessible territory, such as those of deviance, total institutions, and the intersection of life domains.

The theoretical approach adopted, then, determines what

the researcher sees. It is argued here that appropriate attention should be given at all times to both theory and method, and to both levels of experience, subjective and objective. For understanding careers (and also for other undertakings, of course), a distinctively sociological approach or combination of approaches-- those provided by the normative and the interactive theoretical frameworks-- are recommended. The following sections further argue why this should be so. Such a recommendation rests not only upon the perceived deficiencies of the various approaches, but also upon a preferred conceptualization of career and of its place in sociological investigation of the mutual influence of life domains.

Work, Family, and Careers

The intersection and mutual influence of work and family have been neglected in the social sciences but the question of the relationship between forms of work and family life is now a research frontier (Kanter 1977). The result is an exciting array of research that crosscuts traditional theoretical boundaries.

Career studies It is in the literature on working women that we see played out the question of definitions of work vs. career, problems in measuring commitment to work or career, and the meaning of work (Paloma and Garland 1971; Safilios-Rothschild 1971; Haller and Rosenmayr 1971; Fuchs 1971). Not surprisingly, the literature in this area suffers from an elitist bias. The family has traditionally been seen as women's domain. Early writing (e.g., Nye and Hoffman 1963) dealt with wives only, excluding husbands; working wives constituted a social problem. Recent investigation considers the combination of work and family problematic for professional and higher status employed women while essentially ignoring families where wives "just work". Thus empirical research addressing the mutual influences of family and work careers has focused on the dual-career family* (Holmstrom 1972; Bailyn 1970; Rapoport and Rapoport 1969, 1971; Epstein 1971). Career in these studies refers to long-term occupational commitment which has a developmental character; samples are restricted to married couples with this type of work commitment, e.g.,

*This is to be distinguished from the "two-person" career which refers to a special combination of roles wherein both husband and wife respond to formal and informal institutional demands related to the husband's job when only he is employed (Papanek 1972).

professionals and college graduates only.

Women's careers can be described structurally in terms of contrasting patterns such as "conventional"-- the women drops her career at marriage or when she has children; "interrupted"-- she drops her career when the children are small and intends to return to work later; or "continuous"-- work is interrupted minimally or not at all (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971). Another measure is career orientation, or attitude toward work. Such a scheme is used in Bailyn (1970); wives in her sample are classified as "integrated"-- seeking to combine work and family; "traditional"-- favoring the conventional pattern for women; and "mixed"-- favoring women having careers but not as a major source of life satisfaction. Such patterns and orientations can then be combined with husbands' patterns and orientations to describe the family. For example, in a sample of married professional couples Holmstrom (1972) distinguishes "professional" from "traditional" families, the latter referring to those with career- relenquishing wives. Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) combine husbands' and wives' orientations to distinguish "careerist", wherein both spouses emphasize work, "conventional", wherein the husband emphasizes work and the wife, family, or "familistic", wherein both spouses are more concerned with family than with work career. These types are analyzed as they relate to family background, marital satisfaction, and to sources of specific problems and gains in the marital relationship.

Analysis of in-depth interviews indicates that wives in dual-career families, when compared in general to 'conventional" wives, tend to have higher social class backgrounds, to have come from smaller families, to have experienced more loneliness, time alone, and family tension, than their conventional counterparts. Husbands

in dual-career families differ very little from their "conventional" counterparts although they have a stronger history of close, empathetic relations with women in their families of origin (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971). As work in this area increases to include less homogenous samples it will be possible to identify further the antecedent conditions and background characteristics associated with this family-career form.

As an independent variable, type of dual-career is related to marital happiness. "Conventional" marriages of career oriented men and traditional wives are happy as long as the base separation of interests are minimized, and among those in lower income brackets. "Coordinate" marriages of work-integrated women and family oriented men are happier when housework and childcare are shared, and in upper income brackets (Bailyn 1970). Although there are specific problems associated with maintaining mutual career and family orientations, such as work overloading and "multiple role cycling" or the timing of childbearing relative to work demands (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971) the dual-career family has not proven the social problem earlier researchers claimed it would (Nye and Hoffman 1963). Nevertheless it is clear that traditional patterns of male dominance in decision-making persist, even in these less-traditional forms (Epstein 1971; Holmstrom 1972).

A combined career model Bailyn and Schein's (1976) recent conceptual work addressing the nature of the interplay between work career, self, and family over the life span combines elements of the normative developmental, and interactive approaches. Their framework is based on a view of career as two-sided. The external career refers to

progression through societally recognized set of roles, guided by some expected outcome in the occupational sphere. The internal career is the set of roles or stages one defines for oneself; these include needs, values, and ambitions. The external career consists of six stages-- preparation, novitiate, early career, mid-career, late career, and post exit. Looking at stages means looking at careers developmentally. Thus theories of personality development in adulthood should inform career analysis. In the person, "career anchors" (Schein 1975) are the major motive characteristics expressed through career. Commitment to work is measured on a scale of work involvement and is taken to be strongly associated with quality of employment. The empirical derivation of these two measures is demonstrated.

Three structural stages of family life-- single, married with children, and married without children, and three patterns of spouse's relationship to work-- no paid employment, supplementally employed, or fully career engaged, complete the framework. The interaction of external career stage and family variables figures in the individual's work involvement and is associated with her quality of employment. Bailyn and Schein caution that theoretical understanding of the mutual influences of work career, family, and individual development is underdeveloped. Analytically-complex variables such as career anchor and work involvement can be constructed, however, from the innovative combination of less complex indicators.

To summarize, theory and research on work, family, and careers are part of a research frontier. It is not surprising, therefore, that such studies combine elements of more than one theoretical perspective. Empirical work is based on a conceptualization of career as involving commitment and development, yet this work stresses normative concerns such as role relationships, and is built upon models of career-family types as these relate to other variables. Stage or extent of upward mobility is less important than overall time spent in working (pattern) and commitment, largely because this literature has had to come to terms with the defining qualities of women's work.[8] Dual-career studies also tend to rely more upon multiple-method investigation, particularly unstructured in-depth interviewing combined with questionnaires-- further indication of the exploratory state of the art. The intersection of life domains is a fruitful research problem for which the concept career is well-suited.

One suggested alternative to augment the above procedures is to adopt the interactive perspective to uncover the social meaning family and work careers have for the people experiencing them.

[8]Studies measuring the centrality of work among men have discovered that work is not necessarily the central life interest it is assumed to be (Dubin 1955; Palmer 1957; Bailyn and Schein 1976).

The Career Concept

It has been argued that, with some overlap, the literature on careers within sociology falls into four major theoretical frameworks. The conceptualization of career appears to be a particularly good example of noncumulative science. The question of whether or not the term should be retained and under what circumstances has been answered by preferential use, rather than upon theoretical grounds. Traditionally career has been used primarily within the study of occupations, but its usefulness for other spheres has been convincingly proposed, especially among those from the interactive approach. The intersection and synchronization of life domains is a research frontier for which the concept career is particularly well-suited.

A few sociologists have noted the importance of the interaction of various life domains. In his study of life cycle participation in formal associations Wilensky (1960) sees analysis of the interlocking cycles of work, family, consumption and participation, for example as explaining previously contradictory findings in job satisfaction studies. Roth (1963:114) observes that it might be useful "to conceive of the life cycle as an interacting bundle of career timetables" More recently Elder (1975: 178-179) proposes the notion of the life course "a concept of interdependent life paths which vary in synchronization". He goes on to distinguish between career and the related concept life cycle:

> The diverse life lines or sequences in the life course... have been described in the literature as careers, subcycles, life paths, and life histories. While no general concept will be satisfactory to specialists in each domain, a minimal definition of career, as a patterned sequence of movements and events, does at least bring out basic features of the life course. By comparison, the conventional family cycle typology has some important limitations.... various stages do not take into account the differential timing of events... each category may include a range of... ages which is too wide for research on the synchronization of multiple career lines. Information on these career lines is generally required for explanations of stage variations in family life and the life course of individual members.

A sociological conceptualization of career derived from a review of the literature in the four theoretical approaches framing career study fleshes out Elder's definition and directs investigation to specific institutional domains, to both subjective and objective experience, and consists of the essential characteristics centrality, duration, and public conspicuousness.

Implicit in the conceptualization of career in all the approaches reviewed above are the essential career characteristics centrality, duration, and public conspicuousness. Centrality refers to dominant intention or engagement which involves identity and the self. Duration implies persistence over time and includes the structural attributes of career, contingencies, timing, pattern, and sequence. Public conspicuousness indicates that the centrality and duration of an individual's career are recognized as part of the institutional arrangements of society.

Phenomenally, career is anchored both in the social structure (it is publically conspicuous) and in the self (centrality). Career includes movement through experiences that are marked by events involving role change and status passage in a particular sphere or life domain (family, work, community participation), and the changing identity accompanying engagement in that and other domains. The dynamic behind career can be seen as the pursuit of values or life

goals which themselves emerge in the course of experience (Foote 1956; Slotkin 1954) and which give purpose and meaning to life. The interplay of self, social structure, and life goals appear related in more or less ordered, but not predetermined ways when viewed across the life course (duration). Career contingencies include the influence of history, environment, and situation. Thus conceived, career is a truly longitudinal concept, emphasizing (often retrospective) continuity, and permitting analysis of the intersection of spheres while retaining the primary dynamic of antecedent experience in a particular sphere. Career, then, is domain-specific, to reflect the primacy of the social institutions with which the individual comes into contact, yet allows for understanding of the mutual influences of spheres as in the pioneering studies on family and work.

In sum, the term career should be retained. It should be used under the following circumstances: when investigating the timing of events in the life course; when looking at the mutual influence and synchronization of multiple domain-specific behaviors and events[8] and when describing individual and group variations in these behaviors and events. The concept directs investigators to look for markers

[8] It would be useful to refer to different careers according to the institutional domains in which they take place, such as work career, family career etc. It is interesting to note that problems with such a typology may indicate social and institutional change as in the case of houseworking and child-rearing which certainly used to be considered behaviors within a family career, but were mentioned occasionally in discussions of women and occupations (e.g. Caplow 1954). These endeavors may soon face the possibility of monetary remuneration and perhaps even assignment of an occupational code, indicating assignment to the work domain.

or signposts at both the subjective and objective levels, and the interplay between the two within and across multiple domains. Thus, for example, it is expected that life transitions will often serve as career markers, for they involve changes in customary behavior patterns and in self-conception as well.

An illustration and research note This discussion adds up to an argument that 1. the major sociological approaches are not inherently contradictory but rather complementary; 2. a combination of approaches and methods, or triangulation, bridges the gap between them; and 3. certain stages of investigation require an emphasis on methods appropriate to the state of the art therein. Using Spilerman's (1977) work as an example this point will be illustrated.

The area of occupational sociology is highly developed. A great deal is known about men's work experience. In line with normative expectations and the requirements of the division of labor and attendant gender roles, men spend much of their adult lives in the labor market. They have been extensively studied. For describing the large majority of men's publically conspicuous work careers, Spilerman's objective-empirical method is appropriate. In the repertoire of occupational sociology there exists the information to fill out our understanding of objective work career lines. For example, it is known that informal factors figure in achievement, and that one's reference point-- past or future-- determines one's mobility orientation. In short, in this area more than any other career, the typology expressing the boundaries of the objective data is known.

Spilerman describes objective work careers. The area of the relationship and synchronization between these and subjective careers, and between work careers and careers in other domains is relatively unexplored. To complement Silerman we need to know the normative expectations regarding the appropriate timing, pattern and sequence in multiple careers, and how these are generated by individuals.

The proposed orienting conceptualization of the phenomenology and structure of career prepares the way for describing career experience and the synchronization of multiple careers through exploration of career markers or signposts. Research techniques such as field work and in-depth unstructured interviewing are recommended. This procedure is called for particularly when a research area is new and relatively unexplored. Questions to be explored include: how and when does a change in identity accompany the experience of publically conspicuous events? how stable are life goals as they affect career experience? what are the effects of career contingencies upon career-taking and career-making?

Although problems of measurement are outside the scope of this paper, one issue regarding data is in order. Interactionists have observed that the meaning of career emerges with retrospection. In describing the three stages of the mental patient's career Goffman (1961) observes:

> Here is a very ticklish point for the sociology of careers. An important aspect of every career is the view the person constructs when he looks backward over his progress; in a sense, however, the whole of the prepatient career derives from this reconstruction. The fact of having had a prepatient career, starting with an effective complaint, becomes an important part of the mental patient's orientation, but this part can begin to be played only after hospitalization

> proves that when he had been having, but no longer has, is a career as a prepatient (145-146).

The question of time anchoring, then, is important. Longitudinal data collection of retrospective life histories would clarify this point: career may be apparent looking back, and imagined or planned looking forward, but invisible in the here and now.

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